000 virtual disappearance of the former Russian and German official classes.

178 554 565 Moreover, the social structure of the former Russian provinces had crumbled, and the Baltic peoples, who had hitherto been the least considered members of society, were now masters in their own house, chaotic though that house might be. This shift in the balance of power gave rise to a whole series of special problems concerned with the regulation of the relations between the various sections of the community, ranging from the redistribution among the peasants of land which had formerly belonged to the large estate owners, to the definition and stabilization of the position of the national minorities, and the adjustment of the relations between the States and the various religious denominations. It is proposed to reserve discussion of the constitutional and political history of the new States till a later chapter, and to summarize here the ways in which they handled some of the other problems with which they were confronted.

1. Agrarian Reform

423 471 The first concern of the Baltic Governments was the expropriation of the great landed estates and their redistribution among the peasants. Even before the new Constitutions had been drafted, agrarian laws were passed in Estonia in October 1919, and in Latvia in September 1920, while in Lithuania there was a whole series of decrees starting in December 1918, and culminating in the Agrarian Law proper in April 1922.

In Estonia, the reforms were effected almost entirely at the expense of the Baltic Barons;[1] in Latvia, the burden was borne largely by the German Balts, the Poles, and Russians, and some fifty Latvian landowners; while in Lithuania the chief sufferers were the Poles and Russians, especially those who had obtained land on privileged terms from the Russian Government and such institutions as the Nobles' Bank, the Peasants' Land Bank, and the Orthodox Church, the German-Balt element here being negligible.

The treatment meted out to the dispossessed landlords was far more severe in Estonia than in the other two countries, for here they were deprived even of a minimum amount of land for their own use, whereas in Latvia and Lithuania they were at least allowed to retain small residual estates ranging in size from 50 to 100 hectares. In the matter of compensation the Latvian régime was the most severe, for, although the Constituent Assembly had recognized its desirability in principle, a law was passed in April 1924 providing that there should be no indemnity. The limited amount of compensation

[1] About 86·5 per cent. of the expropriated land belonged to the Baltic Barons, 2·8 to Russians, 6·4 to foreigners, and 4·3 to Estonians.